



MARCUS DALY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL CORPORATION

48 EXHIBIT Additional Info
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HB 2

January 21, 2009

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Health & Human Services Subcommittee,

The services and support provided by the Council on Aging programs in Montana are vital to our senior's ability to maintain their independence and dignity. Here in Ravalli County we have a large senior population, many who are living on limited resources. Without adequate support our elderly will be seeking more costly services through emergency rooms, hospitals, and nursing homes. .

Council on Aging programs assist in providing for the essential needs of our senior population:

- * Nutritional needs through Meals on Wheels, congregate meals at Senior Centers, and commodities;
- * Transportation services to assist with medical appointments and shopping;
- * Homemaker services to maintain a livable environment;
- * Assistance & support with signing up for medication plans, filing taxes, conversion to digital TV, arranging legal guidance, etc.
- * Loan closet for Durable Medical Equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, etc.
- * Elderly Ombudsman services;
- * And a key resource for elderly to contact for direction and referral for an unlimited variety of questions or issues.

Reducing funding now will only increase the cost to the system over time. We must ensure these programs have the financial support they need to continue to provide the support needed by our growing elderly population. The economic environment results in an increased need for those elderly on fixed or decreasing incomes; now is not the time to reduce funding. Funding should be increasing as our elderly population increases and the economy worsens the financial status of those on fixed or decreasing incomes.

As a hospital based Social Worker, I rely on the local Council on Aging programs. I make numerous referrals to Council on Aging every week. As Medicare continues to push for shorter hospital lengths of stay, the services provided by the Council of Aging are essential to maintain our senior (over 60 years of age) and qualifying persons with disabilities in the less restricted environment available.

Please ensure that Council on Aging programs across the state continues to receive the financial support they need to provide essential services to our fragile elderly. I hope that you seriously consider the importance of our state wide Council on Aging programs and provide them with the necessary funding to continue their excellence in helping the senior and disabled persons of Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anna Westcott". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Anna Westcott
Director, Medical Social Services